



Michigan *Office of the Auditor General* **REPORT SUMMARY**

Performance Audit

Child Welfare Services(CWS)

State Court Administrative Office (SCAO)

Report Number:
950-0215-05

Released:
September 2007

The Michigan Supreme Court is responsible for the general administrative supervision of all courts in the State and establishes rules for practice and procedure in all courts through the SCAO. The SCAO's mission is to provide leadership and to promote effective, efficient, equitable, uniform, and accessible court and justice system services to advance the highest quality of justice in Michigan. The SCAO created CWS to help the courts expedite permanent placement for foster care children. In fiscal year 2004-05, the State had 21,376 children in foster care.

Audit Objective:

To assess the effectiveness of CWS's efforts to identify barriers that inhibit permanent placement for foster care children.

Audit Conclusion:

We concluded that CWS's efforts were moderately effective in identifying barriers that inhibit permanent placement for foster care children. We noted three reportable conditions (Findings 1 through 3).

Reportable Conditions:

CWS did not ensure that the local foster care review boards (LFCRBs) consistently identified in their finding and recommendation reports, as barriers to permanent placement, instances that LFCRBs found to be the Department of Human Services' (DHS's) inappropriate removal of foster care children from foster care homes (Finding 1).

The Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) did not include statutorily required reporting elements in its annual reports (Finding 2).

The SCAO needs to seek amendatory legislation to compel the cooperation of DHS caseworkers in attending scheduled LFCRB hearings and in providing the LFCRBs with the information pertinent to the cases selected for review (Finding 3).

Noteworthy Accomplishments:

A central component of preparing for the next federal Title IV-E review is to ensure that the State seeks funding only for foster care cases that are Title IV-E compliant. Thus, CWS concentrated on correcting errors related to Title IV-E issues and assisted in drafting legislation that brought State statutes into conformity with federal regulations.

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Audit Objective:

To assess the effectiveness of CWS's efforts to advocate for changes that would expedite permanent placement for children in foster care.

Audit Conclusion:

We concluded that CWS's efforts were moderately effective in advocating for changes that would expedite permanent placement for children in foster care. We noted one reportable condition (Finding 4).

Reportable Condition:

CWS had not fully implemented a comprehensive evaluation process for its Foster Care Review Board Program (FCRBP) and its Court Improvement Program (CIP) (Finding 4).

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Audit Objective:

To assess the effectiveness of CWS's efforts to administer FCRBP in accordance with the provisions of Sections 722.133 - 722.140 of the *Michigan Compiled Laws*.

Audit Conclusion:

We concluded that CWS's efforts to administer FCRBP were effective. However, we noted two reportable conditions (Findings 5 and 6).

Reportable Conditions:

CWS did not retain documentation to validate FCRB data (Finding 5).

The FCRB had not sufficiently improved its documentation practices relating to LFCRB follow-up reviews (Finding 6).

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Subsequent Event:

In October 2006, the Judiciary initiated a reorganization that placed the FCRB and CWS in the Family Services Division of the SCAO.

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Agency Response:

Our audit report contains 6 findings and 6 corresponding recommendations. The Family Services Division's preliminary response indicates that it agrees with 4 recommendations, partially agrees with 1 recommendation, and disagrees with 1 recommendation.

A copy of the full report can be obtained by calling 517.334.8050 or by visiting our Web site at: <http://audgen.michigan.gov>



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